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TAPESTRY PICTURE OF A DRAMATIC SCENE FROM THE PUNIC WARS



Sophonisba and Masinissa, a XVII Century Brussels Tapestry, after Rubens.

VEN in the midst of the most cruel wars, Cupid is able to achieve his triumphs. One of the most striking examples of this in the world's history was the instant subjugation of Masinissa by the charms of Sophonisba. She was the daughter of the Carthaginian general Hasdrubal, and the wife of Syphax, who, like Masinissa, was a Numidian, and with the aid of the Carthaginians had expelled Masinissa from his kingdom. Masinissa, allying himself with the Romans, shared in their Spanish and African victories and finally succeeded in capturing Syphax, his capital, his palace, and his wife, as pictured in "Cabiria." In the tapestry,

Sophonisba is seen kneeling before Masinissa, begging him to save her from the dreadful fate of becoming a Roman captive, and marching through the streets of Rome as a prisoner in Scipio's triumphal procession. Masinissa was so moved by her entreaties and her beauty, that he promised to help her. Regarding Syphax as practically dead, because he was a Roman prisoner, he married Sophonisba on the spot, and returned to headquarters to report to Scipio. The latter reproached him with having married an enemy of the Roman people, and made it clear that he must decide between his loyalty to Rome and his loyalty to

his bride. Masinissa's agony of soul was terrible, but at last he despatched a secret messenger to Sophonisba with a draught of poison, and the message that being no longer able to protect her, he sent her means of saving herself from becoming a Roman captive. Sophonisba received the messenger graciously, and did not hesitate to swallow the poison, but remarked as she did so: "Not unwillingly do I accept my husband's nuptial gift, but I should have preferred not to have my funeral occur on the

same day as my wedding." Masinissa continued in the Roman service, and recovering his kingdom lived in great prosperity to an extreme old age.

Part of the story is also illustrated in a tapestry at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and in one now on exhibition at the Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, lent by Mr. Willoughby H. Stuart, Jr., of Boston. The design of the tapestry before us is by Rubens, and his original color sketch is in the Detroit Museum, I am told, with an incorrect title.

TAPESTRY EXHIBITION AND LECTURES

AT the Avery Library of Columbia University, there is an important and interesting exhibition of French and Flemish tapestries, assembled and arranged by Mr. George Leland Hunter, author of the standard book on tapestries and lecturer on tapestries and furniture at the Metropolitan Museum. Among the tapestries shown are one very early Gothic, five splendid Gobelins, two American Portiers in the style of the Gobelins and after Boucher, two remarkably perfect Louis XIV verdures woven in Brussels, and a number of extraordinarily large and beautiful Renaissance pieces. Especially noteworthy among the Renaissance tapestries is the one that illustrates "Joseph being sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelites." It dates from the first third of the sixteenth century and has the rich and wide border characteristic of the period. Among the Gobelins, are two eighteenth century reproductions from the famous Renaissance "Months of Lucas" both signed by the master weaver AVDRAN,

and both with eighteenth century woven-gilt-frame borders instead of the original Renaissance ones. But the Gobelin that will undoubtedly hold longest the attention of most visitors, is one picturing the Chateau de Chambord, from the famous Louis XIV series of twelve entitled the "Royal Residences," each corresponding to one of the months. The example shown is more interesting in composition than any of those in the French National Collection, and has an unusually attractive border. The series was designed by Charles Lebrun, and during the life of the Sun King was reproduced on the looms more frequently than any other set.

Coincident with the exhibition and illustrative of it, are lectures by Mr. Hunter, the next being with lantern illustrations, on the evening of Nov. 12, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on "Tapestries vs. Paintings"; and the last, a lecture promenade at the Avery Library, on the afternoon of Nov. 19, at 4.15 p. m.